



Murvi Club members on the tow path.
(See Page 9)

Contents:

Editorial	John Laidler	Page 1
The Barmouth Meet	Brian and Ann Biffin	Page 1
Reflections on 2021	Keith and Lynn Ross	Page 3
What Did Time Tell?	Alan Major	Page 5
Out of the UK at Last	Penny and Andrew McCallig	Page 7
Stratford-upon-Avon Canal Walk	Peter Lloyd	Page 9
We Swapped our Murvi for a Boat for a Week!	Maggie and Steve Butler	Page 12
AGM 2022		Page 14
Notices		Page 14

Editorial

At the beginning of 2020 Mary and I were looking forward to catching the ferry from Plymouth to Roscoff and the beginning of what we hoped would be another enjoyable tour in mainland Europe. Of course the journey didn't happen and the ferry crossing has been amended several times until now it sits in our diaries for April 2022. Will we still be going? At the time of writing I really don't know.

But we can at least read about what has been happening this year in the various accounts of meets and trips in this edition of the Murvi Club Newsletter together with a few hints and tips members have kindly submitted.

The November Murvi meet in Barmouth

Brian and Ann Biffin

The action began with an email from Alan, telling me that Marilyn was in hospital with a broken patella, and could I, by any chance, slip into the Murvi driving seat. I willingly accepted the challenge, as I had made a recce in the middle of last year for the 2020 November rally that was cancelled due to COVID.

On our arrival, the site owners were most helpful, and handed me everything I needed to welcome the latecomers. My only issue was with the map: miniscule black pitch numbers printed on dark blue circles, which I was quite unable to read. Fortunately, everyone was happy to assist me, and most people found their assigned pitches.

Friday broke wet and windy, with a high tide making the Promenade walk into Barmouth, to touch base with the Min y Mor Hotel interesting.



Saturday, I was finally able to execute the 9 mile walk I had planned some 18 months earlier. The first mile was, I admit, quite a steep climb. At this point, six of us wisely decided to take the "escape" route, and armed with map and GPS, set off for the Panorama Walk. Fourteen intrepid explorers then continued ever upwards to discover the derelict Manganese mines at Hafotty, which created an interesting landscape.





On reaching the summit of the Rhiwgyr Pass, the sun came out, and we found an idyllic sheltered spot for lunch, with a spectacular view of the Mawddach Estuary. The idyll was somewhat shattered by the smell of two stroke fumes as some motocross enthusiasts rode past, making something of a mess of the footpath in places. I am all in favour of sharing access to our countryside, but sometimes I do wonder..... As we climbed the last incline towards Barmouth, I was quite unable to cajole anyone to make a slightly uphill detour to Panaroma Walk viewpoint - I really can't think why!

Everyone got back in plenty of time for dinner at the Min y Mor, which was most successful.

On Sunday, a few aching limbs were tended and the day was rounded off with a well patronised slide show. I was impressed that so many folk have made the most of the limited access we have had to the open road of late, from Cape Wrath to Cape Cornwall and Barcelona to Brittany. An excellent way to round off a most enjoyable meet.

Reflections on 2021

Keith and Lyn Ross

Since the summer we have continued to be part of every Murvi meet apart from Cheddar and have thoroughly enjoyed all of them, so a big thank you to the organisers. In

total we'll have managed 75 nights away this year, less than we would aim for but OK in the current circumstances.

Hoping to spread our wings and return to visiting Europe in 2022. Still have eyes on getting to Greece but will have to wait and see.

A couple of highlights from the latter part of the summer trips were:-

1. Discovering the delightful Yorkshire town of Helmsley, on the road between Thirsk and Scarborough. Well worth a stopover, especially as the local council have been helpful in creating a free overnight stopping place in the long-term car park, within easy walking distance of the centre.
2. Quite by chance finding a "pop-up" campsite at Whitby. Located right on the cliff edge beside the Abbey and fortuitously next door to a micro-brewery. Also easy to access the steep lane or steps down to the town as well as the Cleveland Way. We will be hoping this site at Abbey Farm re-opens next year.

A completely different "highlight" (or lowlight!) was dealing with an exploding offside rear tyre on the northbound A1M at 9pm. Exploding is not an exaggeration as the sidewall split open allowing the steel wire casing to be exposed and flail around. We were fortunate in a number of aspects:-

1. The van remained stable whilst we pulled over.
2. There was a proper hard shoulder, in addition to 4 running lanes.
3. There was also a very wide (10m) flat grass verge.
4. Peterborough services were just half a mile along the road.



The AA were called out and attended within an hour. Their procedure nowadays is that wheels are not changed at the roadside, instead a recovery truck is used to move the

vehicle to a safer place then change the wheel. It was impressive to watch the recovery truck winch the van aboard, then we moved the short distance the services car park and waited for another AA van to arrive and change the wheel. Good thing our Ducato has a real spare and not a tube of glue.

We have a tracker as fitted by Rex and was pleased (while on the recovery truck) to receive a prompt phone call from them notifying the van was on the move but the engine off.



An item we would like to highlight is the item purchased some years back at the NEC show on the basis of “that looks good we’ll put one in the van”. This is a warning triangle, but one far superior to the standard I’ve seen before. It has 60 red LED lights that automatically light up as the triangle is unfolded, either flashing or steady. I quickly hung this on the rear of the van, in addition to normal yellow hazard lights and the visibility difference was amazing to other traffic. We’re not on commission but recommend this be added to your kit. Ours is from BriteAngle.com.

What Did Time Tell?

Alan Major

Previously I have written about my journey of discovery in the world of SatNav. At the end of 2019 my journey had taken me to a solution that involved running the Sygic Truck & RV Navigation app on an ATOTO head unit.

I found during our COVID-19 limited travels in 2020 and early 2021 this solution worked well. The Sygic app proved reliable and with the benefit of Live Traffic we enjoyed hassle free routing with minimal traffic. The task of keeping the maps and software up to date was greatly eased by the wifi capabilities of the head unit and on site the radio reception was good with excellent sound reproduction. However a weakness that became increasingly apparent as we completed longer journeys was that the ATOTO head unit was not good at following radio stations (automatically re-tuning) as we moved between transmitters.

Initially I thought this was due to the Fiat aerial particularly as I had noticed occasional reception problems with the original Kenwood head unit fitted by Murvi. So I upgraded the radio aerial which improved reception but not the ability of the ATOTO head unit to follow radio stations. After much searching on the web the consensus seemed to be that station following was something that Chinese head units in general struggled with since their R&D departments had no way to test their units' capabilities with the systems used in Europe. In time I became increasingly frustrated by the need to manually re-tune the radio on journeys during which we moved between transmitters. So either it was time to change to listening to stored music on journeys, tolerating silence or undertaking another leg of my journey of discovery. It was time to move on, this solution had proved to be just another waypoint on my journey.

Before going any further I re-assessed the reachability of the destination I had in mind. To re-cap, I wanted a single head unit which would support both radio reception and also the running of my choice of a SatNav app with support for motorhome routing. Stepping further back the reason I was set on a single head unit was that I already had an additional display on top of the dashboard for my 360° camera system and wanted to avoid adding further displays. A return to a mainstream head unit brand was required to ensure station following worked and researching their latest offerings I noticed a couple of Kenwood head units which had the ability to accept input from multiple cameras and permanently display



an image from one of the cameras, i.e. simulate a rear view mirror. With the benefit of stepping further back I realised that this functionality provided an alternative route for solving my problem. I could install one of these Kenwood head units and use its screen to display the output from my 360° camera system. Then I could replace the camera system monitor with a Garmin Camper 890 SatNav unit on top of the dashboard.

On our first trip with this solution it worked well. The Garmin unit is all but an Android tablet and is easily demounted from its dashboard location for easy route setup or storing securely. It is this ease with which the unit is mounted/demounted that addresses my dislike of using a standard tablet. I had not been able to find any way of mounting a standard tablet which offered the same neat one

click approach that the Garmin unit had. Trailing cables and awkward brackets were definitely not acceptable.

This approach does have one compromise which is that the spoken SatNav guidance does not mute the sound from the Kenwood head unit but as my journey continues this is one compromise I think I will make ... for now.

'Out of the UK at Last'

Penny and Andrew McCallig

We're just back from a couple of months away - France, Spain and Portugal. The focus for our first few weeks was using the book 'Hidden Beaches of Spain'. Starting some distance north of Valencia we went to a Natural Park, the Serra de Irta. It's a lovely wild coast, but vehicles above 2.5t are not allowed on the rough track road. So it was off to a cove south of Peniscola to swim in beautiful clear, warm sea.

The next day we had a small mishap, driving along a narrow dirt track to find a (non-existent) spot for Andrew to fly his planes. Nowhere to turn, he reversed into some mud and we were stuck. Later towed out at no small expense.

We carried on along the coast, stopping and swimming daily at delightful, often isolated beaches, staying at ACSI campsites and other places found using Search for sites or Park4night. Spain and Portugal now have many aires - Area Camper or Campercarparks, which we found ideal, with hook up, water and waste facilities for around 10 euros. The one at Mazaron even had a swimming pool. They're similar to the French aires provided by Camping-Car Park. Also used some free wild camping spots. It's hard to believe there are so many quiet coves along the Mediterranean, more well known for monstrosities with tower blocks and endless villas.

Once we got to Tarifa the water was chilly and there were kite surfers to watch. October by now but still very hot during the day.

(Right – the beach at Santander on Spain's north coast.)





There's good parking for campers in Cadiz and the Sail GP catamaran race was on, so we could watch from the van. Also had a delicious meal at Tizi, a restaurant featured in Rick Stein's TV series.

The Algarve offers several motorhome parks too, without the hassle of signing in with passports that campsites need. The beach at Carrapateira, Aljezur, on the south western tip of Portugal was particularly stunning. (left)

After a few days travelling north along the beautiful Alentejo coast we headed east then north back to Spain and France. We had a surprise on our last day in Portugal, as Vila Vehla do Rodao where we parked up was the venue for a speedboat race on the river Tejo. The whole town turned out to watch so it was an exciting event.

During the whole trip we felt safe: mask wearing is still obligatory in shops and other indoor spaces. Everyone sticks to the rules. In France we produced our phones to show the pass sanitaire proof of double vaccination.

All in all we thoroughly enjoyed our longest trip away for 2 years.

And here's a recipe for an 'Easy Cheesy Pasta' we made a couple of times, using the luxury frozen veg mix from Mercadona in Spain. It uses only one pan and reheats ok.



- In a deep pan fry a chopped onion , garlic and red pepper until softening.
- Add 2 cups frozen mixed veg
- 2 cups pasta (not spaghetti)
- 3 cups milk

2 cups stock
teaspoon mixed herbs

Simmer until pasta is cooked to your liking, adding more liquid if necessary, and stir in 2 cups grated cheese. Sprinkle with more if you want.

Stratford-upon-Avon Canal Walk

(How 2 became 9 and 4 became 11)

Peter Lloyd

Checking the weather forecast before driving down to the Murvi Meet at Stratford Racecourse it looked as though Saturday might be dry enough for a walk along the canal towpath. So we packed our walking boots and waterproof jackets as insurance.

Our plan was to take the X20 bus from Stratford out to Wootton Wawen, a journey of 20 mins, and walk the four miles to Wilmcote and return to the town via the 229 bus.

In the gazebo on Friday night we mentioned our plans to the party and invited anyone along to join us. And so our party of two became nine as we set off on foot into the town to catch the bus. Being ignorant of the locale we relied on the driver who, ignoring the designated bus stops, dropped us right by the canal. The party fresh and enthusiastic for the four miles to a pub lunch are shown below.



The first canal feature we encountered was the aqueduct taking us over the road we had arrived along. It was constructed in cast-iron sections and bolted together, with the towpath at the same level as the canal channel.

Those familiar with the *Pont Cysylte* aqueduct in north Wales will recall that the towpath there is above the level of the water which is much less comforting than this arrangement.

The canal was started in 1793 when the town realised that traffic between Birmingham and London was passing within eight miles on a canal they had no access to.

As with many canals during this period, it ran out of money a couple of times during its construction which delayed the completion and reduced the period of prosperity. The builders followed the lead of the midlands canals in building the locks 70 feet long and 7 feet wide. To save money some of the bridges were built with no towpath under them for the horse to use.



This hurdle was overcome by constructing the deck of the bridge in two cast iron sections with a split between them which allowed the tow rope to pass through whilst the horse walked around the bridge. Shown below.



Near Bearley we encountered the longest aqueduct in England according to a red plaque. Edstone Aqueduct is almost 200 yards long and crosses a shallow valley and railway line.

It is the longest of the three such structures on the southern Stratford Canal with the same cast-iron double trough



construction.

We arrived at Wilmcote around noon and walked into the village. Passing Mary Arden's cottage we made for the one of the two pubs for refreshment and sustenance. It was obvious that The Mary Arden Inn was closed up so we enquired at the village shop about The Masons' Arms. This we were informed had closed some time ago but if we went round to the rear of The Mary Arden Inn we would be served. Unfortunately, the landlord of five days had not established any food provision but he was very happy for us to bring sandwiches etc. from the shop and eat them in his garden: which we did.



Over lunch a movement grew to continue walking along the canal with the result that no one returned on the bus from Wilmcote. Suitably refreshed, we set off again for a further four miles or so down the locks to Stratford. On our way we met this lovely narrowboat with a traditional two-cylinder engine. The sound of this chugging round the corner of a deserted stretch of canal was so redolent of the days when working boats plied their trade 200 years ago after the passing of the horse-drawn era.



Soon after leaving Wilmcote we started down the flight of eleven locks grouped in flights of three, five and three and as we descended the hill Stratford-upon-Avon came into view.

On arrival back in Murviland I was surprised to find that our little walk had turned out to be eleven miles. Such was the conviviality of the group and the clemency of the weather that I was not alone in my surprise.



We Swapped our Murvi for a Boat for a Week!

Maggie and Steve Butler

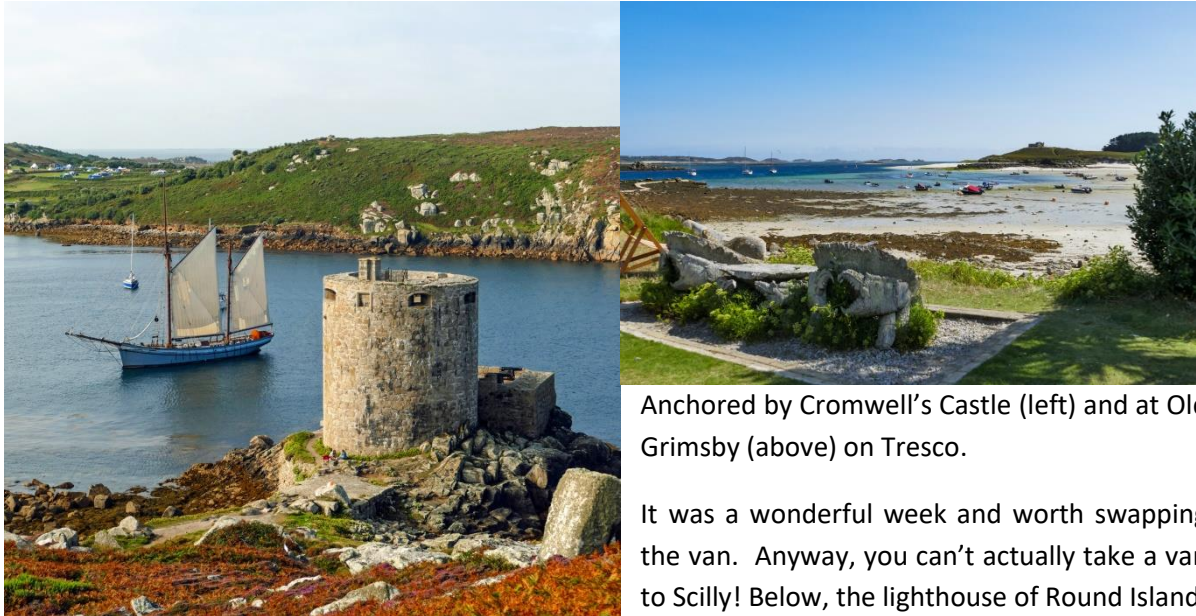
In July 2020 we celebrated our Golden Wedding – seems incredible but we did! We thought a nice idea would be to treat our family to a week's holiday and as they are all keen sailors, perhaps a holiday on a boat would be appropriate. So we trawled through the internet and came across a 100 year old classic sailing ship called Irene that we could charter. She is a 110 foot, gaff-rigged ketch (if that means anything to anyone) built in Bridgwater in 1907 as a trading vessel, and owned by one man since the 1960s. The name was significant as Maggie's Mum was called Irene and so is our grand-daughter. Mum Irene had died in 2019 and we wanted to honour her memory. So all round the holiday had to be on board Irene. Also she could easily accommodate the six adults and three children since she had five double cabins, all with en-suite facilities - very unusual for an old sailing ship. And the charter came with a crew and all food supplied and cooked for us. Perfect. And we could do as much or as little towards the sailing as we wanted. Then the pandemic hit, so August 2020 had to be moved on, but August 2021 saw nine of us ranging in age from 2 to 74 setting sail on Irene.



We embarked at Newlyn in Cornwall – surrounded by fishing boats. Maggie decided once she had got on via the rope ladder she might never get off again, especially with a dicky hip. And when it turned out the only way to get below decks to the cabins, saloon and galley was down spiral staircases..... However, Irene turned out to be the most beautiful ship, with seven sails and all sailing equipment as it would have been a hundred years ago – nothing automatic (apart from a motor). Lots of pulling ropes around belaying pins and four people on a manual windlass to pull up the anchor – that sort of thing.



The plan was to sail to the Isles of Scilly (we had been once before for one day on our honeymoon). The first day we had a really good wind so managed a good sail along the Cornish coast with all sails and no motor. After that, unfortunately or fortunately however you look at it, we had less wind and from the wrong direction so the motor had to be employed to assist in getting us to and from Scilly, but the sails were still used so there was plenty of ‘heave-ho’ work to give us appetites for the excellent meals! Light winds but beautiful weather – clear blue skies all week, and we had dolphins helping us along the way. What a magical place Scilly is – white sandy beaches and crystal clear water. We anchored in a couple of places and went ashore, via the unavoidable rope ladder! We all walked, some swam and played on the beach – idyllic.



Anchored by Cromwell's Castle (left) and at Old Gimsby (above) on Tresco.

It was a wonderful week and worth swapping the van. Anyway, you can't actually take a van to Scilly! Below, the lighthouse of Round Island.



AGM 2022

The Club's next AGM will be held at Stratford Touring Park, Stratford-upon-Avon between Thursday, 31st March and Monday, 4th April, 2022. Further details will be published by email and on the Club Website.

Notices

Bob Eley

As this Newsletter was being put together the Club learned Bob Eley passed away peacefully at home with his family beside him. Many will know Bob from the many meetings he came on and continued to attend despite in recent years failing health.

Maggie will continue as a member of the Club and the Committee and I am sure all members will join me in offering her and the family our most sincere condolences. Bob will be greatly missed.